CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1 – 12 (Canceled)

13. (Previously Presented) A method for the production of metal coated steel products, comprising the steps of:

providing a steel product with a metallic coating,

adding an additional metallic element to said coating, followed by a step of

subjecting said product to a thermal treatment,

characterized in that:

prior to the addition of said additional element, said product is subjected to a plasma treatment, for cleaning and activating the surface of said coating,

said additional element is added through a physical vapour deposition technique,

said thermal treatment is applied by directing high energy infra red radiation towards the outer surface of said coating.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said metallic coating is chosen from the group consisting of: a Zn-coating, an Al-coating, a Zn-Al coating.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said additional metallic element is Mg, and wherein said Mg is added through sputtering or evaporation under low pressure.

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said plasma treatment is a Dielectric Barrier Discharge (DBD) plasma treatment, taking place at a pressure of between 0.1bar and 1bar, under an atmosphere consisting of N_2 or of a mixture of N_2 and H_2.

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said plasma treatment takes place under vacuum.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said thermal treatment is given under an inert atmosphere.

19. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 13, wherein said thermal treatment is given under air.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said product is a steel sheet.

21. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 20, wherein said infra red radiation is directed towards one side of said sheet, during a time interval between 5 and 10 s.

22. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein said infra red radiation is directed towards both sides of said sheet, during a time interval between 3 and 8s.

23. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein the energy density of said infra red radiation is at least 400kW/m^2.

24. (Withdrawn) Apparatus for performing the method of claim 13, comprising:

a means for performing a plasma treatment on a metal coated product,

a means for adding an additional element to said coating by using a physical vapour deposition technique,

a means for directing high energy infra red radiation towards the outer surface of said coating, after adding said additional element.

25. (New) The method according to claim 13, wherein the additional metallic element is a reflectivity reducing agent, reducing a reflectivity of the metallic coating.

26. (New) The method according to claim 13, wherein the infra red radiation thermal treatment is applied before application of any organic coating on the metal coated surface.

27. (New) The method of claim 13, further comprising an apparatus for accomplishing the method, the apparatus including:

a means for performing a plasma treatment on a metal coated product;

a means for adding an additional element to said coating by using a physical vapour deposition technique; and

a means for directing high energy infra red radiation towards the outer surface of said coating, after adding said additional element.